



STUDIES

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ASSESSING THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH: COMMUNITY DIAGNOSIS IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

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ABSTRACT

The Community Diagnosis process in North Carolina has evolved over a period of years, beginning in 1974 but greatly gaining impetus during and after 1983. It serves to address the "true" health problems of the state's citizenry through the identification and communication of these problems from the local level to the state. In this "bottom-up" planning process, which is conducted biennially, the state prepares 100 county-specific Health Data Books and an accompanying guide which advises local health department personnel on the concepts, methods, and materials of community diagnosis.

This information is presented at a series of workshops attended by local personnel who subsequently analyze the data and their local situations and report back to the state their county's priority health problems and solution strategies. These results are then used by the State Health Director to determine funding requests to the legislature. In the end, it is hoped that the products of this process serve the ultimate goal of *allocating resources on a priority basis to meet the documented health needs of North Carolinians*.

For a local health authority, *The Future of Public Health* (Institute of Medicine, 1988) defines a health planning and leadership role that is fundamental to the protection of the community's health. Community Diagnosis provides for the kind of needs assessment that is crucial to that role.